



# DANIEL

*FROM THE SWINDOLL STUDY BIBLE*



*Chuck Swindoll*

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# DANIEL

*"Praise the name of God forever and ever, for he has all wisdom and power.  
He controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings.  
He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars."*

DANIEL 2:20-21

## Who Wrote the Book?

Named after its author, Daniel's book is a product of his time in Babylon as a Jewish exile from Israel. While still a young man, Daniel traveled to Babylon with a group of Israelite nobles, promising young men whom the conquering power felt could be of use in royal service (Dan. 1:3-4). Once they arrived, the leadership in Babylon renamed Daniel Belteshazzar in an effort to more closely identify him with his new home (Dan. 1:7). Daniel lived there throughout the Jews' seventy-year captivity (Dan. 1:21; 9:2), eventually rising to become one of only three administrators over the provincial governors throughout the kingdom (Dan. 6:1-2).

Daniel recorded his experiences and prophecies for the Jewish exiles during his time in the Babylonian capital, where his service to the king gave him privileged access to the highest levels of society. His faithful service to the Lord in a foreign land and culture makes him unique among almost all the people of Scripture—Daniel stands as one of the only major figures in the Bible to produce a completely positive record of his actions.

## Where Are We?

The Babylonians exiled the group including Daniel and his three friends—best known by their Babylonian names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—to the cultural center of the empire, the city of Babylon, in 605 BC. This move was part of the first of three deportations (in 605, 597, and 586 BC) carried out by the Babylonians in Judah after they subdued Jerusalem and the unfaithful King Jehoiakim (2 Kgs. 23:36–24:2). The teenage Daniel found himself in the midst of a strongly polytheistic religious culture, meaning that he had ample opportunity to fall into error. However, he stood firm in his faith among the Babylonian people on several significant matters, including dietary regulations and worship practices (Dan. 1:8-16; 6:6-28).





*Daniel and his friends were deported in 605 BC from Jerusalem to Babylon.*

## Why Is Daniel So Important?

Daniel is one of the few books of the Bible that takes place during a period of judgment (many books foretell it, and a few look back on it) and in a foreign nation. Whether it's in the contrast between the culture's idol worship and Daniel's faithful purity or in the account of the arrogant Nebuchadnezzar and his humbling encounter

with God, the pagan backdrop of Daniel lets the Lord's power shine through in a magnificent and majestic way that stands out in Scripture. The book of Daniel makes it clear that the one true God is the supreme Ruler over heaven and earth (Dan. 4:17), even when all seems lost and the consequences of sin seem overwhelming.

## What's the Big Idea?

The book of Daniel stands as a unique mix in the Old Testament, for while it begins with a historical narrative, it makes a marked transition at chapter 7, which begins a series of visions of future events significant to the Israelite people. In both the historical section and the prophetic section, Daniel presents a strong case for the absolute sovereignty of God, even over a multiplicity of self-

absorbed foreign powers. This theme of sovereignty appears on numerous occasions, including Daniel's deliverance from the lions' den (Dan. 6:19-23), his friends' rescue from the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:23-30), and the vision of the future arrival of the Ancient One to save His people from the forces of evil (Dan. 7:9-22).

*The book of Daniel makes it clear that the one true God is the supreme Ruler over heaven and earth.*

## How Do I Apply This?

Daniel and his God-fearing friends were forced to live in Babylon, far from home and far from the land the Lord had promised the Israelites. In the second half of this book, Daniel prophesies about terrible trials still to come in the Promised Land due to the sin and disobedience of God's people (see, for example, Dan. 11:31). Have you ever endured the weight or consequences of sin and felt as though God has left you behind, that He has stranded you in a world far from the comforts associated with home? The book of Daniel paints a portrait of how to serve God faithfully in the middle of such a world and how to persevere in hope even with no immediate solutions to the problems that get us down.

	Historical Section <i>Daniel Interprets Others' Dreams</i>	Prophetic Section <i>Angel Interprets Daniel's Dreams</i>		
	Daniel 1–6	Daniel 7–12		
Emphasis	Daniel the prophet	The prophecies of Daniel		
Content	Introduction and setting ( <i>ch. 1</i> ) Nebuchadnezzar's apocalyptic dream ( <i>ch. 2</i> ) Historical narratives (personal and political) ( <i>ch. 3–6</i> )	Daniel's foundational vision ( <i>ch. 7</i> ) Prophetic visions (near and far) ( <i>ch. 8–12</i> )		
Political Powers	<b>Babylonian Rule</b> Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar	<b>Medo-Persian Rule</b> Darius Cyrus	<b>Greek Rule</b> Alexander the Great Four generals	<b>Roman Rule</b> Last of the Gentile powers
Theme	God's sovereignty over kingdoms and His unfolding plan for the future			
Key Verses	Daniel 2:20-22, 44; 4:34-37			
Christ in Daniel	The Rock that will crush the earth's kingdoms (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45); the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13-14); the coming Messiah who will be crucified (Dan. 9:25-26)			

### *Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's Court*

**1** During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah,\* King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup>The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia\* and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

<sup>3</sup>Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. <sup>4</sup>"Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning,

are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.\*" <sup>5</sup>The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. <sup>7</sup>The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.  
Hananiah was called Shadrach.  
Mishael was called Meshach.  
Azariah was called Abednego.

1:1 This event occurred in 605 B.C., during the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (according to the calendar system in which the new year begins in the spring). 1:2 Hebrew *the land of Shinar*. 1:4 Or of the Chaldeans.

**A YOUNG CAPTIVE** *Dan. 1:1-7* When Daniel was captured by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC, he was no more than a teenager. If his mother and father were still living, it was probably the last time he ever saw them. He was among a number of youths from noble families who were taken to Babylon as a warning to Jerusalem and Judah. From that number, the king selected some, including Daniel and his three friends, who would be of value to him in his government. They were expected to pick up the new culture, language, and lifestyle of this polytheistic society.

Think about a thirteen-year-old boy you know, and

consider what it might look like if he faced the rigors of this kind of training for three years. How would he do under the constant barrage of the philosophy and lifestyle of a metropolis like Babylon? Taking a moment to imagine this makes Daniel's integrity all the more remarkable. This is what speaks to us as we consider his circumstances and his character.

How do you pass a test like this without cheating? It takes inner conviction. It requires making a decision up front—and the earlier the better. Make up your mind: "No matter where I am, I will walk with God."

# The Nature of Integrity

DANIEL 1:1-16

**EVERY ONE OF US** will come to a fork in the road—not just once, but many times in our lives. When we come to a fork, sometimes there are great banners waving, directing us to follow one route as opposed to the other. That route is wide and well trafficked. The other is narrow and rugged. When you come to a fork like that, you make a decision. Then the route you choose leads to yet other forks in the road.

Moses came to one of those forks when he became great: He had to decide whether he would allow people to call him the pharaoh-in-waiting or not (Heb. 11:24; see Exod. 2:1-10). Later, here in Daniel 1, we read about how Daniel the Hebrew is offered the excesses of the Babylonian lifestyle. This man has integrity. He comes to a fork in the road and makes a decision for the Lord. He is willing to give up whatever is necessary, essentially saying, “We will not eat the king’s food—the Lord alone has my highest allegiance.” Later, Daniel faces another fork in the road, and because of his persistent integrity, he winds up in a den of lions (Dan. 6). In the events leading up to that intimidating, frightening scene, he still does not crack.

As I think about these decisions made by uncompromising saints, I reflect on the nature of integrity. True integrity means that you do what is right when no one is looking and when no one even cares. We are living, for example, in a day of marital compromise. When a marriage commitment falls flat, society says to just get a divorce. We live in a day when there has been a breakdown of integrity in the trades—shoddy, superficial work is done just to get money out of another unwitting customer. We live in a day when people carelessly steal words from other people and present them as their own—plagiarism. Real integrity stays in place whether the test is adversity or prosperity, weakness or power. Real integrity remains whether you are a simple, hardworking individual in obscurity or you sit in the Oval Office.

I want to challenge you with the life of Daniel. I want you to see the practical value of a life of integrity. If you let God take your life and give you guidelines for how you live, you will be living for His glory. If you think that this will make you a dull, unattractive, or ineffective kind of person, you’ve missed the message of Daniel’s life. In God’s power, not his own, Daniel came out on top. Like Daniel, when you do what is right, you will sometimes be misunderstood and maligned even if you are as pure as can be. However, you will become a powerful instrument in the hand of God.

It is never too late to start doing what is right and living with integrity. Because we are failures and sinners, we all have had things in our pasts that have not been marked by integrity. Leave the past behind (see 1 Pet. 4:1-5). Begin to live an intentionally clean life before God with no compromise to your Christian identity and values, and He will give you freedom and power that you cannot possibly imagine.

*It is never too late to start living with integrity. God will give you freedom and power that you cannot possibly imagine.*

<sup>8</sup>But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. <sup>9</sup>Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. <sup>10</sup>But he responded, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded."

<sup>11</sup>Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>12</sup>"Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. <sup>13</sup>"At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." <sup>14</sup>The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

<sup>15</sup>At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. <sup>16</sup>So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

<sup>17</sup>God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.

<sup>18</sup>When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup>The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. <sup>20</sup>Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

<sup>21</sup>Daniel remained in the royal service until the first year of the reign of King Cyrus.\*

### *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*

**2** One night during the second year of his reign,\* Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep. <sup>2</sup>He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers,\* and he

demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, <sup>3</sup>he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means."

<sup>4</sup>Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic,\* "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

<sup>5</sup>But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble! <sup>6</sup>But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!"

<sup>7</sup>They said again, "Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

<sup>8</sup>The king replied, "I know what you are doing! You're stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, <sup>9</sup>'If you don't tell me the dream, you are doomed.' So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I'll know that you can tell me what it means."

<sup>10</sup>The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! <sup>11</sup>The king's demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people."

<sup>12</sup>The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed.

<sup>13</sup>And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

<sup>14</sup>When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. <sup>15</sup>He asked Arioch, "Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?" So Arioch told him all that had happened. <sup>16</sup>Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant.

<sup>17</sup>Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened.

<sup>18</sup>He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise

1:21 Cyrus began his reign (over Babylon) in 539 B.C. 2:1 The second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign was 603 B.C. 2:2 Or *Chaldeans*; also in 2:4, 5, 10. 2:4 The original text from this point through chapter 7 is in Aramaic.

**WISDOM AT WORK** *Dan. 1:8-16* Daniel talked to the chief of staff about his convictions with marvelous wisdom. He didn't require kosher beef from Judah, and he didn't walk around like a pampered little Jewish prince. He requested simple dietary arrangements that were easy on his superior and allowed Daniel and his friends to honor God.

As a Christian, there are situations where you may be tempted to put your Christian superior on the spot because of your shared faith. However, it is most often wiser not to do so. A businessman friend once confessed to me that he

was no longer fond of hiring other Christians because of their continued presumption on his good graces. Special favors and drastic measures were almost expected by his Christian employees, without any concern that he himself had to answer to an unbelieving superior.

Daniel was very gracious. He did not come across as a phony or a fanatic. If you're going to ask for accommodations, do it graciously. Don't set yourself up as a "holy Joe." Don't make those around you look foolish or stupid, or even wrong. Make your requests tactfully.

men of Babylon. <sup>19</sup>That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven. <sup>20</sup>He said,

- “Praise the name of God forever and ever,  
for he has all wisdom and power.  
<sup>21</sup> He controls the course of world events;  
he removes kings and sets up other kings.  
He gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to the scholars.  
<sup>22</sup> He reveals deep and mysterious things  
and knows what lies hidden in darkness,  
though he is surrounded by light.  
<sup>23</sup> I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors,  
for you have given me wisdom and strength.  
You have told me what we asked of you  
and revealed to us what the king demanded.”

### *Daniel Interprets the Dream*

<sup>24</sup>Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, whom the king had ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him, “Don’t kill the wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him the meaning of his dream.”

<sup>25</sup>Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king and said, “I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell the king the meaning of his dream!”

<sup>26</sup>The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar), “Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?”

<sup>27</sup>Daniel replied, “There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king’s secret. <sup>28</sup>But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar

what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

<sup>29</sup>“While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. <sup>30</sup>And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.

<sup>31</sup>“In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. <sup>32</sup>The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay. <sup>34</sup>As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain,\* but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. <sup>35</sup>The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

<sup>36</sup>“That was the dream. Now we will tell the king what it means. <sup>37</sup>Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. <sup>38</sup>He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.

<sup>39</sup>“But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take

2:34 As in Greek version (see also 2:45); Hebrew lacks *from a mountain*.

### **TRUST GOD THROUGH CHANGE** *Dan. 2:20-21*

Daniel’s new leader, Nebuchadnezzar, was a godless king who thought he was God in the flesh. How’s that for a boss? He saw himself as sovereign over the whole world. Daniel’s people had been invaded and swallowed up by Babylon, and Daniel’s whole life had changed. He had learned a new culture, had learned a new language, and was given a new name: Belteshazzar.

But Daniel was fixed to what doesn’t change: “Praise the name of God forever and ever,” he says in this passage, “for he has all wisdom and power. He controls the course of world events.”

God, who “controls the course of world events,” loves change. Why? Because it makes us trust Him. You can’t get rooted in any particular year because another year is on its way. Leadership changes, our needs change, and the availability of resources changes. But if we are fixed to the unchanging One who controls all change, we can live lives of trust and praise.

**THE STATUE AND THE STONE** *Dan. 2:44* Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of a statue (Dan. 2:31-35) as a succession of kingdoms that will each fall in its time, and he straightforwardly identifies King Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom as the head of gold (Dan. 2:38). The other parts of the statue, however, are not so clearly identified by Daniel.

In retrospect, we see that this prophetic vision of the statue represented the Medes and Persians by the chest and arms of silver, the Greeks (under Alexander) by the belly and thighs of bronze, and the Romans by the legs of iron. The feet, the iron mixed with clay, represented the Western world empires. Rome has died, but the tentacles of Rome live on in our modern jurisprudence systems and military strategies. This Roman kingdom in the Western world empires will deteriorate—there will be bits of iron, but there will also be pieces of pottery, and they will never mix. There are unmixable principles at work.

Finally, this earthly kingdom will be shattered by a rock (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45), and the legacy of these empires will fall flat. The rock is clearly set forth in Scripture as the person of Jesus Christ (see, for example, Isa. 2:2 and 1 Pet. 2:6-7). He’s the stone that is cut out without hands. He will establish a worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness the likes of which has never been known before.



your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third kingdom, represented by bronze, will rise to rule the world. <sup>40</sup>Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth one, as strong as iron. That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes. <sup>41</sup>The feet and toes you saw were a combination of iron and baked clay, showing that this kingdom will be divided. Like iron mixed with clay, it will have some of the strength of iron. <sup>42</sup>But while some parts of it will be as strong as iron, other parts will be as weak as clay. <sup>43</sup>This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage. But they will not hold together, just as iron and clay do not mix.

<sup>44</sup>“During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. <sup>45</sup>That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”

#### *Nebuchadnezzar Rewards Daniel*

<sup>46</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him. <sup>47</sup>The king said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret.”

<sup>48</sup>Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. <sup>49</sup>At Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king’s court.

#### *Nebuchadnezzar’s Gold Statue*

**3** King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide\* and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup>Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up. <sup>3</sup>So all these officials\* came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

<sup>4</sup>Then a herald shouted out, “People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king’s command! <sup>5</sup>When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments,\* bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue. <sup>6</sup>Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

<sup>7</sup>So at the sound of the musical instruments,\* all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

<sup>8</sup>But some of the astrologers\* went to the king and informed on the Jews. <sup>9</sup>They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “Long live the king! <sup>10</sup>You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. <sup>11</sup>That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. <sup>12</sup>But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.”

<sup>13</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, <sup>14</sup>Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? <sup>15</sup>I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound

3:1 Aramaic 60 cubits [27 meters] tall and 6 cubits [2.7 meters] wide. 3:3 Aramaic the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials. 3:5 The identification of some of these musical instruments is uncertain. 3:7 Aramaic the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, and other musical instruments. 3:8 Aramaic Chaldeans.

**WHEN TO BUCK AUTHORITY** *Dan. 3:8-12* Daniel was chosen by God to work under the godless King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel served on what we would think of as Nebuchadnezzar’s cabinet. Daniel’s three friends, who had been given the names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were also members of the king’s administration (Dan. 1:19; 2:49), and they were men of God. They worked under this unbelieving authority without at all compromising their godly principles.

For much of the time, this was apparently a peaceful endeavor. Everything went well. They did their job for the Lord, faithfully carrying out every command—until the king

made a decree that they could not follow. In Daniel 3:12 we read how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused when the authorities required the worship of someone other than the God of heaven. They disobeyed the authorities because the authorities had moved into an area that they had no right to move into. Was this pleasing to God? The story of the fiery furnace speaks for itself.

We see a similar circumstance in Daniel 6:10, where Daniel refuses to obey a law prohibiting prayer to God. Daniel disobeys, and God honors and blesses His servant—protecting him in the lions’ den—because no one is to be the object of our petitions in prayer besides God Himself.

## BABYLON

### An Ancient Powerhouse

DANIEL 3



The Ishtar Gate of Babylon shone with lapis lazuli and was decorated with dragons and bulls.

**THE AMORITE PEOPLE** who migrated east to Sumer built the ancient city of Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates River. In the century prior to the Exile, the Assyrians had conquered the region, but the Chaldeans slowly began gaining power and strength. Eventually they overpowered the Assyrians and took control of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar II, the king who conquered Judah, reigned as the most powerful and influential Babylonian king during a time when Babylon had great authority and control in the ancient Near East.

The Babylonians excelled as builders and are known for their magnificent hanging gardens (named among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World). They also constructed a massive temple to honor their god Marduk, as well as huge palaces and public buildings along the banks of the Euphrates. Other highlights of Babylonian architecture included two great walls surrounding the city and nine gates of the inner wall. Ishtar was a Babylonian goddess of fertility and war, and the imposing gate dedicated to her was constructed with bright blue bricks, which would have sparkled like jewels in the sunlight. The walls themselves featured ornate decorations with large reliefs of dragons and bulls. In the nineteenth century, archaeologists excavated this gate and part of the walls and then rebuilt them in Berlin's Pergamon Museum.

In 605 BC, Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon as part of the plunder Nebuchadnezzar took when he conquered Jerusalem. They might have been brought into the city through the Ishtar Gate and paraded as spoils of war. The Lord blessed Daniel and his friends, whom He also used to help govern the Babylonian Empire (Dan. 1:8-21; 2:17-49; 3:28-30; 6:1-5). In the book of Daniel, we see that God is much more powerful than empires that build magnificent cities and conquer great nations. God is so powerful that He rules the future and governs the world at all times (Dan. 7-12).

of the musical instruments.\* But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

<sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. <sup>17</sup>If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. <sup>18</sup>But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

### The Blazing Furnace

<sup>19</sup>Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. <sup>20</sup>Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. <sup>21</sup>So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. <sup>22</sup>And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. <sup>23</sup>So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.

<sup>24</sup>But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied.

<sup>25</sup>"Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!"

<sup>26</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. <sup>27</sup>Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!

<sup>28</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his

angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup>Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!"

<sup>30</sup>Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

### Nebuchadnezzar's Dream about a Tree

**4** <sup>1\*</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world:

"Peace and prosperity to you!

<sup>2</sup>"I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me.

<sup>3</sup> How great are his signs,  
how powerful his wonders!  
His kingdom will last forever,  
his rule through all generations.

<sup>4\*</sup>"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity. <sup>5</sup>But one night I had a dream that frightened me; I saw visions that terrified me as I lay in my bed. <sup>6</sup>So I issued an order calling in all the wise men of Babylon, so they could tell me what my dream meant. <sup>7</sup>When all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers,\* and fortune-tellers came in, I told them the dream, but they could not tell me what it meant. <sup>8</sup>At last Daniel came in before me, and I told him the dream. (He was named Belteshazzar after my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

<sup>9</sup>"I said to him, 'Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too great for you to solve. Now tell me what my dream means.

<sup>10</sup>"While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth. <sup>11</sup>The tree grew very tall and strong,

3:15 Aramaic the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. 3:25 Aramaic like a son of the gods. 4:1 Verses 4:1-3 are numbered 3:31-33 in Aramaic text. 4:4 Verses 4:4-37 are numbered 4:1-34 in Aramaic text. 4:7 Or Chaldeans.

### GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN ALL THINGS Dan. 3:20

God is sovereign, whether the result is triumph or tragedy. Unfortunately, we have the idea that when we are protected or divinely delivered, then the sovereignty of God is upheld, but when we suffer incredible defeat or loss, then we have to hide our faces and hope nobody asks us what kind of God we serve. Well, the answer is that He is a sovereign God—even when we suffer. Remember also the story of

Job. The same God who gave to Job took away from Job (Job 1:21). Believing in a sovereign God does not mean that things always turn out our way, and though He tells us that He causes everything to work together for good (Rom. 8:28), He doesn't say that everything is good. Yet He is sovereign, whether in triumph or tragedy, and we are called to remain His faithful people.

reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. <sup>12</sup>It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree.

<sup>13</sup>“Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger,\* a holy one, coming down from heaven. <sup>14</sup>The messenger shouted,

“Cut down the tree and lop off its branches!  
Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit!  
Chase the wild animals from its shade  
and the birds from its branches.

<sup>15</sup> But leave the stump and the roots in the ground,  
bound with a band of iron and bronze  
and surrounded by tender grass.  
Now let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,  
and let him live with the wild animals  
among the plants of the field.

<sup>16</sup> For seven periods of time,  
let him have the mind of a wild animal  
instead of the mind of a human.

<sup>17</sup> For this has been decreed by the messengers\*;  
it is commanded by the holy ones,  
so that everyone may know  
that the Most High rules over the kingdoms  
of the world.

He gives them to anyone he chooses—  
even to the lowliest of people.”

<sup>18</sup>“Belteshazzar, that was the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now tell me what it means, for none of the wise men of my kingdom can do so. But you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

### *Daniel Explains the Dream*

<sup>19</sup>“Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) was overcome for a time, frightened by the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, ‘Belteshazzar, don’t be alarmed by the dream and what it means.’

“Belteshazzar replied, ‘I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you!’ <sup>20</sup>The tree you saw was growing very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see. <sup>21</sup>It had fresh green leaves and was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. <sup>22</sup>That tree, Your Majesty, is you. For you have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth.

<sup>23</sup>“Then you saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with

a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live with the animals of the field for seven periods of time.”

<sup>24</sup>“This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king. <sup>25</sup>You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses. <sup>26</sup>But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.

<sup>27</sup>“King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.”

### *The Dream’s Fulfillment*

<sup>28</sup>“But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup>Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. <sup>30</sup>As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.’

<sup>31</sup>“While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom.

<sup>32</sup>You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’

<sup>33</sup>“That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.

### *Nebuchadnezzar Praises God*

<sup>34</sup>“After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever.

His rule is everlasting,  
and his kingdom is eternal.



# Pride and Humility

DANIEL 4:30

**HOW DOES PRIDE** manifest itself? What are the garments that this sin wears? Pride can be subtle. It's not like gluttony. When we're gluttonous, we wear it. It's obvious to everyone when we have eaten too much. When we are angry, it isn't long before it impacts our relationships. There's no hiding an angry spirit—not for long. When we are greedy, it isn't long before it's clear that what we want is money, money, and more money. When we are envious, it is obvious by our suspiciousness and our catty remarks toward people that we want what they've got. But when we are proud, there are all kinds of ways this sin can be demonstrated. Some of them are obvious, some of them very subtle.

These include an air of superiority, an attitude of selfishness, and a win-at-any-cost determination where relationships are sacrificed on the altar of success. Overt pride makes us seek the praise of other people. We become glory hogs. We play to the grandstand. We are like peacocks displaying our feathers with flair. But pride can also be subtle. Our culture is obsessed with things like physical attractiveness, wealth, knowledge, social status, and power over other people, and all of these things can feed pride. We can be proud of our physique, proud of our appearance. We can put down other people who don't measure up to what we think is the right standard. We can claim to have taste when in fact it's nothing more than sophisticated pride. We can be anxious to make sure that other people know about our educational accomplishments.

Sometimes I say to people, "It took you four or five years to get your advanced degree, but it's taken you forty or fifty years to get over it!" No one cares how many letters are after your name. No one cares how many diplomas hang on your wall. You may care, but you're the only one. How subtle we are in our pride, holding ourselves aloof from those who haven't reached the level that we've reached—winning Salesperson of the Year or rapidly rising through promotions. There is nothing wrong with those kinds of achievements. But how easy it is to carry ourselves with arrogance rather than with a sense of gratitude for what God has given us.

There are occasions when God finally says, "That's enough." That's when He levels us. There's an example in Daniel 4 of just such an occasion. Nebuchadnezzar had wealth, popularity, influence, and power. Then he had a dream—a warning to acknowledge that God is the One who is sovereign. But Nebuchadnezzar turned a deaf ear. So at the height of his pride, God knocked him down. Just like that, it was over.

God is able to humble anybody who walks in pride. Anybody! Presidential hopefuls. Magnificent athletes. Gifted and wealthy entrepreneurs. Capable homemakers. He is able to humble anybody, even bringing us to the point of insanity if necessary, until we learn that the Most High is able to humble those who walk in pride (Dan. 4:37). It's better to learn humility in the presence of God before He knocks us down.

*How easy it is to carry ourselves with arrogance rather than with a sense of gratitude for what God has given us.*

<sup>35</sup> All the people of the earth  
are nothing compared to him.  
He does as he pleases  
among the angels of heaven  
and among the people of the earth.  
No one can stop him or say to him,  
“What do you mean by doing these things?”

<sup>36</sup> “When my sanity returned to me, so did my  
honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and  
nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head  
of my kingdom, with even greater honor than  
before.

<sup>37</sup> “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify  
and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just  
and true, and he is able to humble the proud.”

### *The Writing on the Wall*

**5** Many years later King Belshazzar gave a great  
feast for 1,000 of his nobles, and he drank wine  
with them. <sup>2</sup> While Belshazzar was drinking the wine,  
he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver cups  
that his predecessor,\* Nebuchadnezzar, had taken  
from the Temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to drink  
from them with his nobles, his wives, and his concu-  
bines. <sup>3</sup> So they brought these gold cups taken from  
the Temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the  
king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines  
drank from them. <sup>4</sup> While they drank from them they  
praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron,  
wood, and stone.

<sup>5</sup> Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand  
writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near  
the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as  
it wrote, <sup>6</sup> and his face turned pale with fright. His  
knees knocked together in fear and his legs gave way  
beneath him.

<sup>7</sup> The king shouted for the enchanters, astrolo-  
gers,\* and fortune-tellers to be brought before him.  
He said to these wise men of Babylon, “Whoever can  
read this writing and tell me what it means will be  
dressed in purple robes of royal honor and will have  
a gold chain placed around his neck. He will become  
the third highest ruler in the kingdom!”

<sup>8</sup> But when all the king's wise men had come in,  
none of them could read the writing or tell him what

it meant. <sup>9</sup> So the king grew even more alarmed, and  
his face turned pale. His nobles, too, were shaken.

<sup>10</sup> But when the queen mother heard what was  
happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said  
to Belshazzar, “Long live the king! Don't be so pale  
and frightened. <sup>11</sup> There is a man in your kingdom  
who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. Dur-  
ing Nebuchadnezzar's reign, this man was found to  
have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of  
the gods. Your predecessor, the king—your predeces-  
sor King Nebuchadnezzar—made him chief over all  
the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-  
tellers of Babylon. <sup>12</sup> This man Daniel, whom the king  
named Belteshazzar, has exceptional ability and is  
filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He  
can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve dif-  
ficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you  
what the writing means.”

### *Daniel Explains the Writing*

<sup>13</sup> So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king  
asked him, “Are you Daniel, one of the exiles brought  
from Judah by my predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar?”  
<sup>14</sup> I have heard that you have the spirit of the  
gods within you and that you are filled with insight,  
understanding, and wisdom. <sup>15</sup> My wise men and en-  
chanters have tried to read the words on the wall and  
tell me their meaning, but they cannot do it. <sup>16</sup> I am  
told that you can give interpretations and solve dif-  
ficult problems. If you can read these words and tell  
me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes  
of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed  
around your neck. You will become the third highest  
ruler in the kingdom.”

<sup>17</sup> Daniel answered the king, “Keep your gifts or  
give them to someone else, but I will tell you what  
the writing means. <sup>18</sup> Your Majesty, the Most High  
God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to  
your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> He made him  
so great that people of all races and nations and  
languages trembled before him in fear. He killed  
those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted  
to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and  
disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. <sup>20</sup> But when  
his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance,

5:2 Aramaic father; also in 5:11, 13, 18. 5:7 Or Chaldeans; also in 5:11.

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S LESSON** *Dan. 4:35* This verse contains a truth that is an anchor to hold on to in a crazy world. When you begin to see life through Daniel 4:35, you will have more clarity and peace. If you ever feel out of your mind—like you are in a maddening vortex of confusion, uneasiness, discouragement, and depression—your reason will begin to return to you if you can understand that our sovereign God is in the heavens, doing as He pleases in the universe. Does this mean that there will be no mysteries? No, life is full of mysteries and unanswerable puzzles.

I cannot explain why God does all that He does. I can only stand and testify that He is in charge. As His child, I pledge my allegiance to His sovereign control over my life.

Not until we embrace His sovereignty will we begin to develop the ability to reason theologically. When I embraced it, I found that my confidence increased and my worries decreased. Calmness replaced striving. The need to get even and to get back at people and to hold grudges began to fade.

## PEOPLE PROFILES

# Daniel

## A MAN OF INTEGRITY

DANIEL was a man of the finest kind of strength. He was a man of absolute integrity. When integrity marks a person's life, it makes that life a striking display of God's power and presence. The story about Daniel in the lions' den gives us insight into the depth of Daniel's faith and helps us see what integrity is all about. Four truths about Daniel stand out.

First, *Daniel had an excellent attitude*. When King Darius appointed Daniel as one of three rulers to look after his affairs, Daniel wasn't paranoid or intimidated because he was surrounded by people who marched to a different beat. His attitude and his exceptional qualities distinguished him above all of his peers (Dan. 6:3).

Second, *Daniel was trustworthy in his responsibilities*. The men who plotted against Daniel tried to find *any grounds at all* for bringing charges against him. Imagine! They investigated Daniel's life closely for an area of compromise, a blot on his record, some place where he had been unfaithful, some time when he had messed up. But they couldn't find one. Not one! Daniel could be trusted to do the right thing no matter what, no matter where, no matter when.

Third, *Daniel was privately and publicly pure*. When Daniel's peers were unable to find fault with his character, they had only one place to turn. Look at the frustration expressed in the conclusion they reached: "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion" (Dan. 6:5). They would set Daniel up. They would catch him in the single most significant point on which he differed from Darius. They would attack him in the only area where he seemed vulnerable. But no one took into account the awesome power of Daniel's God, the great King above all gods.

Fourth, *Daniel had a consistent walk with God*. When Darius took the advice of his officials and proclaimed himself the god of the month, the one who alone must be prayed to and worshiped, Daniel refused to comply with the decree. Now remember, this decree was in effect for only thirty days. Daniel could have simply shut himself up in his closet and prayed to God and not made a big deal out of it. But the consistency of his walk with God demanded that he live as he had always lived. So just like he always did, he knelt down and prayed with the windows of his house open, in full view of his enemies (Dan. 6:10).

What glee Daniel's enemies must have felt as they rushed to the king with their report! As a result, Daniel was convicted and thrown into the den of lions. But as long as Daniel was in that den, those lions experienced the greatest case of lockjaw in history. Not one cat nibbled on him. He came out without a single scratch. When King Darius found Daniel alive the next day, he was overjoyed.

Remember, to be a man or woman of integrity is not easy—in fact, that's the last thing it is. People who live lives of integrity are often misunderstood, falsely accused, and maligned in many different ways. Living with integrity goes against the grain of the way most people choose to live. But Daniel's life proves that a person of integrity is a powerful instrument in the hand of God.

### QUICK FACTS

- > **SETTING** Judah, Babylon, Persia
- > **OCCUPATIONS** Prophet, royal adviser
- > **CONTEMPORARIES** Friends: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Kings: Nebuchadnezzar II, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus the Great

### KEY LESSONS

- > Quiet convictions can earn long-term respect.
- > Don't wait until you are in a tough situation to learn about prayer.
- > God can use people wherever they are.

### LEARN MORE

Daniel's story is told in the book of Daniel. He is also mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3; and Matthew 24:15.

he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. <sup>21</sup>He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.

<sup>22</sup>"You are his successor,\* O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. <sup>23</sup>For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! <sup>24</sup>So God has sent this hand to write this message.

<sup>25</sup>"This is the message that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. <sup>26</sup>This is what these words mean:

*Mene* means 'numbered'—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.

<sup>27</sup> *Tekel* means 'weighed'—you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up.

<sup>28</sup> *Parsin*\* means 'divided'—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

<sup>29</sup>Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

<sup>30</sup>That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian\* king, was killed.\*

<sup>31</sup>\*And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.

### *Daniel in the Lions' Den*

**6**<sup>1</sup>\*Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a high officer to rule over each province. <sup>2</sup>The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the high officers and protect the king's interests. <sup>3</sup>Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.

<sup>4</sup>Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy. <sup>5</sup>So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion."

<sup>6</sup>So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius! <sup>7</sup>We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup>And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked." <sup>9</sup>So King Darius signed the law.

<sup>10</sup>But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God. <sup>11</sup>Then the officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help. <sup>12</sup>So they went straight to the king and reminded him about his law. "Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions?"

5:22 Aramaic *son*. 5:28 Aramaic *Peres*, the singular of *Parsin*. 5:30a Or *Chaldean*. 5:30b The Persians and Medes conquered Babylon in October 539 B.C. 5:31 Verse 5:31 is numbered 6:1 in Aramaic text. 6:1 Verses 6:1-28 are numbered 6:2-29 in Aramaic text.

**COURAGE** *Dan. 5:22-23* Courage is the ability to control and direct fear into positive action. Courage stands its ground between rashness and cowardice. Moral courage faces down the fear of embarrassment, shame, or censure. Daniel was a man with this type of courage, and it shows in his ability to unabashedly confront Belshazzar for his brazen idolatry.

**FRIENDSHIP WITH UNBELIEVERS** *Dan. 6:18* Darius's friendship with Daniel shows in his reaction when he realizes that Daniel has been caught in this legal trap. He is troubled and thinks, *How can I get Daniel out of this?* He pursues this course until sundown (see Dan. 6:14). He cannot sleep and is too sorrowful to turn to any entertainment.

He anxiously awaits the dawn. When Daniel is found alive, the king's relief is palpable (Dan. 6:23).

Do you have a friend that close? Someone who will stand with you, whose concern for you would keep them up at night? Do you have fairly close friendships with anybody outside the family of God? My mentor, the late Dr. Howard Hendricks, observed that after about three years, the average Christian will release any unbelievers from his or her circle of friends and run only with Christians. That's a real shame. I'm not talking about maintaining the kind of relationships that lead you into compromise, but I am talking about sharing sincere mutual support with people outside the faith. Without believers having such relationships, how can the love of God be manifested to unbelievers?



"Yes," the king replied, "that decision stands; it is an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked."

<sup>13</sup>Then they told the king, "That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is ignoring you and your law. He still prays to his God three times a day."

<sup>14</sup>Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.

<sup>15</sup>In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty, you know that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed."

<sup>16</sup>So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you."

<sup>17</sup>A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel. <sup>18</sup>Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn't sleep at all that night.

<sup>19</sup>Very early the next morning, the king got up and hurried out to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup>When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?"

<sup>21</sup>Daniel answered, "Long live the king! <sup>22</sup>My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."

<sup>23</sup>The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.

<sup>24</sup>Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.

<sup>25</sup>Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world:

"Peace and prosperity to you!

<sup>26</sup>"I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel.

For he is the living God,  
and he will endure forever.  
His kingdom will never be destroyed,  
and his rule will never end.

<sup>27</sup>He rescues and saves his people;  
he performs miraculous signs and wonders  
in the heavens and on earth.  
He has rescued Daniel  
from the power of the lions."

<sup>28</sup>So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.\*

### *Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts*

**7** Earlier, during the first year of King Belshazzar's reign in Babylon,\* Daniel had a dream and saw visions as he lay in his bed. He wrote down the dream, and this is what he saw.

<sup>2</sup>In my vision that night, I, Daniel, saw a great storm churning the surface of a great sea, with strong winds blowing from every direction. <sup>3</sup>Then four huge beasts came up out of the water, each different from the others.

<sup>4</sup>The first beast was like a lion with eagles' wings. As I watched, its wings were pulled off, and it was left standing with its two hind feet on the ground, like a human being. And it was given a human mind.

<sup>5</sup>Then I saw a second beast, and it looked like a bear. It was rearing up on one side, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And I heard a voice saying to it, "Get up! Devour the flesh of many people!"

<sup>6</sup>Then the third of these strange beasts appeared, and it looked like a leopard. It had four bird's wings on its back, and it had four heads. Great authority was given to this beast.

<sup>7</sup>Then in my vision that night, I saw a fourth beast—terrifying, dreadful, and very strong. It devoured and crushed its victims with huge iron teeth and trampled their remains beneath its feet. It was different from any of the other beasts, and it had ten horns.

<sup>8</sup>As I was looking at the horns, suddenly another small horn appeared among them. Three of the first horns were torn out by the roots to make room for it. This little horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth that was boasting arrogantly.

<sup>9</sup>I watched as thrones were put in place  
and the Ancient One\* sat down to judge.  
His clothing was as white as snow,  
his hair like purest wool.  
He sat on a fiery throne  
with wheels of blazing fire,

6:28 Or of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian. 7:1 The first year of Belshazzar's reign (who was co-regent with his father, Nabonidus) was 556 B.C. (or perhaps as late as 553 B.C.). 7:9 Aramaic *an Ancient of Days*; also in 7:13, 22.

### **THE BEASTS AND THE SON OF MAN** *Dan. 7:1-27*

There is a direct tie-in between Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a statue represents four successive kingdoms: Babylon, Media and Persia, Greece, and finally Rome and the Western nations. Then Christ comes, crushes the statue, and sets up an eternal Kingdom. In Daniel 7, we read of a vision of four beasts representing these same four successive kingdoms. They are ultimately succeeded by an eternal "son of man" (Dan. 7:13-14).

The fourth, vicious, ten-horned beast reflects the Roman Empire and the Western world powers, but the meaning of its little horn (Dan. 7:8) cannot be fully realized until the time of the final Antichrist. This power will face judgment and be destroyed, ushering in God's eternal Kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> and a river of fire was pouring out, flowing from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him; many millions stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened.

<sup>11</sup>I continued to watch because I could hear the little horn's boastful speech. I kept watching until the fourth beast was killed and its body was destroyed by fire. <sup>12</sup>The other three beasts had their authority taken from them, but they were allowed to live a while longer.\*

<sup>13</sup>As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man\* coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup>He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

### *The Vision Is Explained*

<sup>15</sup>I, Daniel, was troubled by all I had seen, and my visions terrified me. <sup>16</sup>So I approached one of those standing beside the throne and asked him what it all meant. He explained it to me like this: <sup>17</sup>"These four huge beasts represent four kingdoms that will arise from the earth. <sup>18</sup>But in the end, the holy people of the Most High will be given the kingdom, and they will rule forever and ever."

<sup>19</sup>Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, the one so different from the others and so terrifying. It had devoured and crushed its victims with iron teeth and bronze claws, trampling their remains beneath its feet. <sup>20</sup>I also asked about the ten horns on the fourth beast's head and the little horn that came up afterward and destroyed three of the other horns. This horn had seemed greater than the others, and it had human eyes and a mouth that was boasting arrogantly. <sup>21</sup>As I watched, this horn was waging war against God's holy people and was defeating them, <sup>22</sup>until the Ancient One—the Most High—came and judged in favor of his holy people. Then the time arrived for the holy people to take over the kingdom.

<sup>23</sup>Then he said to me, "This fourth beast is the fourth world power that will rule the earth. It will be different from all the others. It will devour the whole

world, trampling and crushing everything in its path. <sup>24</sup>Its ten horns are ten kings who will rule that empire. Then another king will arise, different from the other ten, who will subdue three of them. <sup>25</sup>He will defy the Most High and oppress the holy people of the Most High. He will try to change their sacred festivals and laws, and they will be placed under his control for a time, times, and half a time.

<sup>26</sup>"But then the court will pass judgment, and all his power will be taken away and completely destroyed. <sup>27</sup>Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will last forever, and all rulers will serve and obey him."

<sup>28</sup>That was the end of the vision. I, Daniel, was terrified by my thoughts and my face was pale with fear, but I kept these things to myself.

### *Daniel's Vision of a Ram and Goat*

**8** <sup>1\*</sup>During the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, saw another vision, following the one that had already appeared to me. <sup>2</sup>In this vision I was at the fortress of Susa, in the province of Elam, standing beside the Ulai River.\*

<sup>3</sup>As I looked up, I saw a ram with two long horns standing beside the river.\* One of the horns was longer than the other, even though it had grown later than the other one. <sup>4</sup>The ram butted everything out of his way to the west, to the north, and to the south, and no one could stand against him or help his victims. He did as he pleased and became very great.

<sup>5</sup>While I was watching, suddenly a male goat appeared from the west, crossing the land so swiftly that he didn't even touch the ground. This goat, which had one very large horn between its eyes, <sup>6</sup>headed toward the two-horned ram that I had seen standing beside the river, rushing at him in a rage. <sup>7</sup>The goat charged furiously at the ram and struck him, breaking off both his horns. Now the ram was helpless, and the goat knocked him down and trampled him. No one could rescue the ram from the goat's power.

<sup>8</sup>The goat became very powerful. But at the height of his power, his large horn was broken off. In the large horn's place grew four prominent horns pointing in the four directions of the earth. <sup>9</sup>Then from one of the prominent horns came a small horn whose power

7:12 Aramaic for a season and a time. 7:13 Or like a Son of Man. 8:1 The original text from this point through chapter 12 is in Hebrew. See note at 2:4. 8:2 Or the Ulai Gate; also in 8:16. 8:3 Or the gate; also in 8:6.

**THE PLAN OF PROPHECY** *Dan. 7:28* Daniel 7 gives us a collage of prophetic images bound together in one vision—bits and pieces, fragments sort of spilled out on the page. This prophecy gives a sweeping view without great detail. Similarly, God has revealed His plan for us in broad terms. He's given us just enough to whet our appetites, and if you would really like to know more about His plan . . . join the club. So would I.

Although the collage presented in Scripture leaves questions, it supplies enough information to let us know that

God's plan is being worked out. So we should take away from this collage of prophecy a message about God's sovereignty that stirs our hope and trust in Him, both for today and for tomorrow. While life may appear to be a messy collage, it is in reality the unfolding of a plan—a *perfect* plan.

The God who has mapped out our future is certainly able to handle the present. The One who took the time to put this kind of detail into the future, even with all of its questions yet unanswered, has the present under control. He's a specialist in the current issues of today.

grew very great. It extended toward the south and the east and toward the glorious land of Israel. <sup>10</sup>Its power reached to the heavens, where it attacked the heavenly army, throwing some of the heavenly beings and some of the stars to the ground and trampling them. <sup>11</sup>It even challenged the Commander of heaven's army by canceling the daily sacrifices offered to him and by destroying his Temple. <sup>12</sup>The army of heaven was restrained from responding to this rebellion. So the daily sacrifice was halted, and truth was overthrown. The horn succeeded in everything it did.\*

<sup>13</sup>Then I heard two holy ones talking to each other. One of them asked, "How long will the events of this vision last? How long will the rebellion that causes desecration stop the daily sacrifices? How long will the Temple and heaven's army be trampled on?"

<sup>14</sup>The other replied, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the Temple will be made right again."

### *Gabriel Explains the Vision*

<sup>15</sup>As I, Daniel, was trying to understand the meaning of this vision, someone who looked like a man stood in front of me. <sup>16</sup>And I heard a human voice calling out from the Ulai River, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of his vision."

<sup>17</sup>As Gabriel approached the place where I was standing, I became so terrified that I fell with my face to the ground. "Son of man," he said, "you must understand that the events you have seen in your vision relate to the time of the end."

<sup>18</sup>While he was speaking, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground. But Gabriel roused me with a touch and helped me to my feet.

<sup>19</sup>Then he said, "I am here to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath. What you have seen pertains to the very end of time. <sup>20</sup>The two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>21</sup>The shaggy male goat represents the king of Greece,\* and the large horn between his eyes represents the first king of the Greek Empire. <sup>22</sup>The four prominent horns that replaced the one large horn show that the Greek Empire will break into four kingdoms, but none as great as the first.

<sup>23</sup>"At the end of their rule, when their sin is at its height, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power. <sup>24</sup>He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a shocking amount of

## **PRAYER MOMENT** DAN. 8:27

*Our heavenly Father, all of us would be quick to say that we need to be relieved of our anxieties, for they are many, and they are frequent. Help us to humbly trust You and to stop feeling like we need to understand the reasons for everything that unfolds around us. Show us again, Lord, that You are God and there is no other—that You are in the heavens and You do whatever You please. Remind us that You are at work in our lives, in the lives of our neighbors, and in the lives of those who live across the street, across the country, and across the seas. No other is in charge, and You alone do all things well. May that truth bring us security and rest in You. Amen.*

destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people. <sup>25</sup>He will be a master of deception and will become arrogant; he will destroy many without warning. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human power.

<sup>26</sup>"This vision about the 2,300 evenings and mornings\* is true. But none of these things will happen for a long time, so keep this vision a secret."

<sup>27</sup>Then I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for several days. Afterward I got up and performed my duties for the king, but I was greatly troubled by the vision and could not understand it.

### *Daniel's Prayer for His People*

**9** It was the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus, who became king of the Babylonians.\* <sup>2</sup>During the first year of his reign, I,

8:11-12 The meaning of the Hebrew for these verses is uncertain. 8:21 Hebrew of Javan.

8:26 Hebrew about the evenings and mornings; compare 8:14. 9:1 Or the Chaldeans.

**JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY** Dan. 9:2 Daniel, probably now a man of eighty years old, reports that he is reading Jeremiah. This is one of those rare places where the Bible itself talks about someone reading some other portion of the Bible. Daniel has a scroll of Jeremiah, or at least a portion of it. Having unrolled the scroll, he reads through the Hebrew text and comes across what we know as Jeremiah 25:1-13. This is the passage in which Jeremiah confronts his fellow Judahites about their continued idolatry and declares specifically that God will send them to

captivity under Nebuchadnezzar for seventy years, after which Babylon will be overthrown. Daniel begins to see his life there on the parchment. It must have been a moving experience, because he realized that he was near the end of that seventy-year period. He could look back on decades of captivity with his people, and he had recently watched Babylon come under the power of the Medes and Persians. He could now know from the prophecy of Jeremiah that God was moving. So he began to pray in earnest (Dan. 9:3).

Daniel, learned from reading the word of the LORD, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years.\* <sup>3</sup>So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting. I also wore rough burlap and sprinkled myself with ashes.

<sup>4</sup>I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

“O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your covenant and keep your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and obey your commands. <sup>5</sup>But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations. <sup>6</sup>We have refused to listen to your servants the prophets, who spoke on your authority to our kings and princes and ancestors and to all the people of the land.

<sup>7</sup>“Lord, you are in the right; but as you see, our faces are covered with shame. This is true of all of us, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you.

<sup>8</sup>O LORD, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. <sup>9</sup>But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him. <sup>10</sup>We have not obeyed the LORD our God, for we have not followed the instructions he gave us through his servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup>All Israel has disobeyed your instruction and turned away, refusing to listen to your voice.

“So now the solemn curses and judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured down on us because of our sin.

<sup>12</sup>You have kept your word and done to us and our rulers exactly as you warned. Never has there been such a disaster as happened in Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>Every curse written against us in the Law of Moses has come true. Yet we have refused to seek mercy from the LORD our God by turning from our sins and recognizing his truth. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, the LORD has brought upon us the disaster he prepared. The LORD our God was right to do all of these things, for we did not obey him.

<sup>15</sup>“O Lord our God, you brought lasting honor to your name by rescuing your people from Egypt in a great display of power. But we have sinned and are full of wickedness. <sup>16</sup>In view of all your faithful mercies, Lord, please turn your furious anger away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. All the neighboring nations mock Jerusalem and your people because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors.

<sup>17</sup>“O our God, hear your servant’s prayer! Listen as I plead. For your own sake, Lord, smile again on your desolate sanctuary.

<sup>18</sup>“O my God, lean down and listen to me. Open your eyes and see our despair. See how your city—the city that bears your name—lies in ruins. We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy.

<sup>19</sup>“O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for your people and your city bear your name.”

#### *Gabriel’s Message about the Anointed One*

<sup>20</sup>I went on praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people, pleading with the LORD my God for Jerusalem, his holy mountain. <sup>21</sup>As I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came swiftly to me at the time of the evening sacrifice. <sup>22</sup>He explained to me, “Daniel, I have come here to give you insight and understanding. <sup>23</sup>The moment you began praying, a command was given. And now I am here to tell you what it was, for you are very precious to God. Listen carefully so that you can understand the meaning of your vision.

<sup>24</sup>“A period of seventy sets of seven\* has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.\* <sup>25</sup>Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven\* will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One\*—comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses,\* despite the perilous times.

9:2 See Jer 25:11-12; 29:10. 9:24a Hebrew *seventy sevens*. 9:24b Or *the Most Holy One*. 9:25a Hebrew *Seven sevens plus sixty-two sevens*. 9:25b Or *an anointed one*; similarly in 9:26. Hebrew reads *a messiah*. 9:25c Or *and a moat, or and trenches*.

**DIVINE ILLUMINATION** *Dan. 9:21-22* In the days of Daniel, the Holy Spirit was not permanently resident in believers. When God’s Spirit did fill someone, it was often temporary and for the purpose of a specific task. The faithful—priests and prophets, farmers and shepherds—relied on angelic appearances or the audible voice of God or visions at night for divine revelation. So God sent an angel to Daniel to give him “insight and understanding” as he read from Jeremiah (see Dan. 9:2).

This is one of the reasons the Holy Spirit has been given

to the church today. When we open the Bible, the Holy Spirit rolls up His sleeves, as it were, and goes to work inside of us. He’s involved in making the puzzle come together. Haven’t you had it happen? You’ve looked at a passage, you’ve worked your way through it, and it looks like somebody just sort of dumped out the pieces of a puzzle. So you wrestle around with them. Then as you’re digging further, you get the border pieced together. Then the corners fall into place, and then all of a sudden the picture is there. That’s what’s happening for Daniel through the angel Gabriel.



# Learning from Daniel's Prayer

DANIEL 9:4–11:1

**DANIEL** was a person of prayer, and his example should inspire us. In Daniel 10, we also gain a window into the unseen world. Let me share with you five lessons about prayer from this passage.

First, *when a believer prays, he or she is immediately heard by God*. The angel says to Daniel, “Since the first day you began to pray . . . your request has been heard in heaven” (Dan. 10:12). There’s no waiting as far as God is concerned. Whatever infinite amount of space or inaccessible dimensions are involved, the child of God has access to the throne of God by simply uttering a prayer.

Second, *demonic forces can delay answers to prayer*. This we accept by faith. We cannot feel it or prove it by modern scientific method. We accept what God says. This passage speaks of a delay of three weeks (Dan. 10:2-3, 13). God had dispatched an angel as the answer to Daniel’s prayer, but en route he was intercepted and delayed for a time. It took three weeks for the angelic messenger to get past the demonic delay. We don’t always know why answers are delayed, but we can be sure that there are spiritual forces at work that we cannot see or fully understand. Be patient. God will answer.

Third, *wrestling in prayer is exhausting work*. As Daniel says, “My strength is gone, and I can hardly breathe” (Dan. 10:17). You who have wrestled long in prayer need no further explanation. There is nothing more exhausting or exacting than bearing someone up in prayer—that wayward child or spiritually lost parent or spouse.

Some are wrestling on behalf of vast people groups who know little or nothing of the gospel and who die daily of starvation and preventable illness. It’s hard work.

Indeed, the most significant battle to be done is done on the knees. Even if you are not engaged in the footwork of witnessing, you will open opportunities for those who are when you advance on your knees. When you wrestle in prayer before God, He will open up areas of witness that have not yet been opened.

Fourth, *after such experiences, extra measures of strength return*. It’s remarkable how God brings strength just when we need it. Daniel received it through the ministry of an angel (Dan. 10:18-19). I occasionally hear of such instances even today, times when these creatures come and visit and bring encouragement. But more often, in the church we find the ministry of the Holy Spirit and fellow believers building us up after our struggles in prayer. We can find refreshment at God’s altar in worship and in fellowship with our brothers and sisters.

Fifth, *overcoming demonic forces is not a once-for-all matter*. The angel states that he must leave Daniel to continue to fight the spiritual forces that oppose God (Dan. 10:20). The battle rages on. If you have overcome the forces of the wicked one, then praise God. But the satanic world system that is being blocked and exposed will continue to resist God and His people. If you know believers who serve in government, pray hard for them. Forces of evil have been dispatched against them to counteract and nullify and paralyze their efforts as they follow God’s leading.

*The most significant battle to be done is done on the knees.*

<sup>26</sup>“After this period of sixty-two sets of seven,\* the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end. <sup>27</sup>The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven,\* but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds,\* he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration,\* until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him.”

### *Daniel's Vision of a Messenger*

**10** In the third year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia,\* Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) had another vision. He understood that the vision concerned events certain to happen in the future—times of war and great hardship.

<sup>2</sup>When this vision came to me, I, Daniel, had been in mourning for three whole weeks. <sup>3</sup>All that time I had eaten no rich food. No meat or wine crossed my lips, and I used no fragrant lotions until those three weeks had passed.

<sup>4</sup>On April 23,\* as I was standing on the bank of the great Tigris River, <sup>5</sup>I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. <sup>6</sup>His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning, and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people.

<sup>7</sup>Only I, Daniel, saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing, but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide. <sup>8</sup>So I was left there all alone to see this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak. <sup>9</sup>Then I heard the

man speak, and when I heard the sound of his voice, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

<sup>10</sup>Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. <sup>11</sup>And the man said to me, “Daniel, you are very precious to God, so listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you.” When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling.

<sup>12</sup>Then he said, “Don’t be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. <sup>13</sup>But for twenty-one days the spirit prince\* of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels\* came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia.\* <sup>14</sup>Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come.”

<sup>15</sup>While he was speaking to me, I looked down at the ground, unable to say a word. <sup>16</sup>Then the one who looked like a man\* touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing in front of me, “I am filled with anguish because of the vision I have seen, my lord, and I am very weak. <sup>17</sup>How can someone like me, your servant, talk to you, my lord? My strength is gone, and I can hardly breathe.”

<sup>18</sup>Then the one who looked like a man touched me again, and I felt my strength returning. <sup>19</sup>“Don’t be afraid,” he said, “for you are very precious to God. Peace! Be encouraged! Be strong!”

As he spoke these words to me, I suddenly felt stronger and said to him, “Please speak to me, my lord, for you have strengthened me.”

<sup>20</sup>He replied, “Do you know why I have come? Soon

**9:26** Hebrew *After sixty-two sevens*. **9:27a** Hebrew *for one seven*. **9:27b** Hebrew *And on the wing*; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. **9:27c** Hebrew *an abomination of desolation*. **10:1** The third year of Cyrus's reign was 536 B.C. **10:4** Hebrew *On the twenty-fourth day of the first month*, of the ancient Hebrew lunar calendar. This date in the book of Daniel can be cross-checked with dates in surviving Persian records and can be related accurately to our modern calendar. This event occurred on April 23, 536 B.C. **10:13a** Hebrew *the prince*; also in 10:13c, 20. **10:13b** Hebrew *the chief prince*. **10:13c** As in one Greek version; Hebrew reads *and I was left there with the kings of Persia*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. **10:16** As in most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text; one manuscript of the Masoretic Text and one Greek version read *Then something that looked like a human hand*.

**TWO REALMS** *Dan. 10:4-6* The ancients were comfortable with the concept that reality exists in two worlds—the physical and the spiritual, the seen and the unseen. Today, however, most people in the West sneer at that notion, dismissing it as mythology. Skeptics won’t believe in anything they can’t see or touch—they require “hard evidence.” They call the many unexplainable good things that happen on this earth coincidences, while Christians often call them miracles. Daniel understood that two realms exist. Biblical truth compels you and me to stand with Daniel and the ancients. From the vantage point of Daniel and the other prophets we see the reality of the unseen and gain a new perspective that will transform our understanding of prayer.

**UNSEEN DOMINIONS** *Dan. 10:13* There is an unseen hierarchy that interlocks with and tracks the organization of people on planet Earth. Daniel speaks of a spiritual being

who was the prince of the kingdom of Persia, guiding and moving in unseen concert with the earthly kingdom of Persia. This spiritual world system is described in 1 John 5:19 as “under the control of the evil one.” Daniel also mentions a spirit prince of the kingdom of Greece, so it is reasonable to surmise that there was likely also an unseen prince of the kingdom of Egypt, and in our day, of England and of America—spiritual forces watching over elections and the political and military strategies of earthly leaders. Yet these all lie within the hands of a sovereign God.

I wish our understanding of this were greater. God reveals but a glimpse of these goings-on for those who are involved in prayer. But that glimpse is enough to know that there are spiritual forces at work in the political structures of our world, and we would be wise to bring governments and leaders before God in prayer (see 1 Tim. 2:1-4).

I must return to fight against the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia, and after that the spirit prince of the kingdom of Greece\* will come. <sup>21</sup>Meanwhile, I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one helps me against these spirit princes except Michael, your spirit prince.\* <sup>11:1</sup>I have been standing beside Michael\* to support and strengthen him since the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede.)

### *Kings of the South and North*

**11** <sup>22</sup>Now then, I will reveal the truth to you. Three more Persian kings will reign, to be succeeded by a fourth, far richer than the others. He will use his wealth to stir up everyone to fight against the kingdom of Greece.\*

<sup>3</sup>“Then a mighty king will rise to power who will rule with great authority and accomplish everything he sets out to do. <sup>4</sup>But at the height of his power, his kingdom will be broken apart and divided into four parts. It will not be ruled by the king’s descendants, nor will the kingdom hold the authority it once had. For his empire will be uprooted and given to others.

<sup>5</sup>“The king of the south will increase in power, but one of his own officials will become more powerful than he and will rule his kingdom with great strength.

<sup>6</sup>“Some years later an alliance will be formed between the king of the north and the king of the south. The daughter of the king of the south will be given in marriage to the king of the north to secure the alliance, but she will lose her influence over him, and so will her father. She will be abandoned along with her supporters. <sup>7</sup>But when one of her relatives\* becomes king of the south, he will raise an army and enter the fortress of the king of the north and defeat him. <sup>8</sup>When he returns to Egypt, he will carry back their idols with him, along with priceless articles of gold and silver. For some years afterward he will leave the king of the north alone.

<sup>9</sup>“Later the king of the north will invade the realm of the king of the south but will soon return to his own land. <sup>10</sup>However, the sons of the king of the north will assemble a mighty army that will advance like a flood and carry the battle as far as the enemy’s fortress.

<sup>11</sup>“Then, in a rage, the king of the south will rally against the vast forces assembled by the king of the north and will defeat them. <sup>12</sup>After the enemy army is swept away, the king of the south will be filled with pride and will execute many thousands of his enemies. But his success will be short lived.

<sup>13</sup>“A few years later the king of the north will return with a fully equipped army far greater than before. <sup>14</sup>At that time there will be a general uprising against the king of the south. Violent men among your own people will join them in fulfillment of this vision, but they will not succeed. <sup>15</sup>Then the king of the north will come and lay siege to a fortified city and capture it. The best troops of the south will not be able to stand in the face of the onslaught.

<sup>16</sup>“The king of the north will march onward

unopposed; none will be able to stop him. He will pause in the glorious land of Israel,\* intent on destroying it. <sup>17</sup>He will make plans to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will form an alliance with the king of the south. He will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom from within, but his plan will fail.

<sup>18</sup>“After this, he will turn his attention to the coastland and conquer many cities. But a commander from another land will put an end to his insolence and cause him to retreat in shame. <sup>19</sup>He will take refuge in his own fortresses but will stumble and fall and be seen no more.

<sup>20</sup>“His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. But after a very brief reign, he will die, though not from anger or in battle.

<sup>21</sup>“The next to come to power will be a despicable man who is not in line for royal succession. He will slip in when least expected and take over the kingdom by flattery and intrigue. <sup>22</sup>Before him great armies will be swept away, including a covenant prince. <sup>23</sup>With deceitful promises, he will make various alliances. He will become strong despite having only a handful of followers. <sup>24</sup>Without warning he will enter the richest areas of the land. Then he will distribute among his followers the plunder and wealth of the rich—something his predecessors had never done. He will plot the overthrow of strongholds, but this will last for only a short while.

<sup>25</sup>“Then he will stir up his courage and raise a great army against the king of the south. The king of the south will go to battle with a mighty army, but to no avail, for there will be plots against him. <sup>26</sup>His own household will cause his downfall. His army will be swept away, and many will be killed. <sup>27</sup>Seeking nothing but each other’s harm, these kings will plot against each other at the conference table, attempting to deceive each other. But it will make no difference, for the end will come at the appointed time.

<sup>28</sup>“The king of the north will then return home

10:20 Hebrew of Javan. 10:21 Hebrew against these except Michael, your prince.

11:1 Hebrew him. 11:2 Hebrew of Javan. 11:7 Hebrew a branch from her roots.

11:16 Hebrew the glorious land.

### **THE COMING TRIBULATION** *Dan. 11:1-45*

Daniel 11 is one of the most remarkable chapters in the entire Bible. In the first thirty-five verses, there are dozens of prophecies that by now have been literally fulfilled and confirmed by historical events.

Daniel witnessed the cruel spectacle of war. He observed the battles that would take place between the successors of Alexander the Great as well as the future climactic and demonic warfare that will occur at the time of the final Antichrist. As we read Daniel’s vision, we see a grim picture of the inescapable worldwide war that will surround those who enter the Tribulation without Christ. It’s not an attractive scene. But it’s real, and it’s coming.

with great riches. On the way he will set himself against the people of the holy covenant, doing much damage before continuing his journey.

<sup>29</sup>“Then at the appointed time he will once again invade the south, but this time the result will be different. <sup>30</sup>For warships from western coastlands\* will scare him off, and he will withdraw and return home. But he will vent his anger against the people of the holy covenant and reward those who forsake the covenant.

<sup>31</sup>“His army will take over the Temple fortress, pollute the sanctuary, put a stop to the daily sacrifices, and set up the sacrilegious object that causes desecration.\* <sup>32</sup>He will flatter and win over those who have violated the covenant. But the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him.

<sup>33</sup>“Wise leaders will give instruction to many, but these teachers will die by fire and sword, or they will be jailed and robbed. <sup>34</sup>During these persecutions, little help will arrive, and many who join them will not be sincere. <sup>35</sup>And some of the wise will fall victim to persecution. In this way, they will be refined and cleansed and made pure until the time of the end, for the appointed time is still to come.

<sup>36</sup>“The king will do as he pleases, exalting himself and claiming to be greater than every god, even blaspheming the God of gods. He will succeed, but only until the time of wrath is completed. For what has been determined will surely take place. <sup>37</sup>He will have no respect for the gods of his ancestors, or for the god loved by women, or for any other god, for he will boast that he is greater than them all. <sup>38</sup>Instead of these, he will worship the god of fortresses—a god his ancestors never knew—and lavish on him gold, silver, precious stones, and expensive gifts. <sup>39</sup>Claiming this foreign god’s help, he will attack the strongest fortresses. He will honor those who submit to him, appointing them to positions of authority and dividing the land among them as their reward.\*

<sup>40</sup>“Then at the time of the end, the king of the south will attack the king of the north. The king of the north will storm out with chariots, charioteers, and a vast navy. He will invade various lands and

sweep through them like a flood. <sup>41</sup>He will enter the glorious land of Israel,\* and many nations will fall, but Moab, Edom, and the best part of Ammon will escape. <sup>42</sup>He will conquer many countries, and even Egypt will not escape. <sup>43</sup>He will gain control over the gold, silver, and treasures of Egypt, and the Libyans and Ethiopians\* will be his servants.

<sup>44</sup>“But then news from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in great anger to destroy and obliterate many. <sup>45</sup>He will stop between the glorious holy mountain and the sea and will pitch his royal tents. But while he is there, his time will suddenly run out, and no one will help him.

### *The Time of the End*

**12** “At that time Michael, the archangel\* who stands guard over your nation, will arise. Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence. But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued. <sup>2</sup>Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace. <sup>3</sup>Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever. <sup>4</sup>But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end, when many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase.”

<sup>5</sup>Then I, Daniel, looked and saw two others standing on opposite banks of the river. <sup>6</sup>One of them asked the man dressed in linen, who was now standing above the river, “How long will it be until these shocking events are over?”

<sup>7</sup>The man dressed in linen, who was standing above the river, raised both his hands toward heaven and took a solemn oath by the One who lives forever, saying, “It will go on for a time, times, and half a time. When the shattering of the holy people has finally come to an end, all these things will have happened.”

<sup>8</sup>I heard what he said, but I did not understand what he meant. So I asked, “How will all this finally end, my lord?”

<sup>9</sup>But he said, “Go now, Daniel, for what I have said is kept secret and sealed until the time of the end. <sup>10</sup>Many will be purified, cleansed, and refined by these trials. But the wicked will continue in their wickedness, and none of them will understand. Only those who are wise will know what it means.

<sup>11</sup>“From the time the daily sacrifice is stopped and the sacrilegious object that causes desecration\* is set up to be worshiped, there will be 1,290 days. <sup>12</sup>And blessed are those who wait and remain until the end of the 1,335 days!

<sup>13</sup>“As for you, go your way until the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days, you will rise again to receive the inheritance set aside for you.”

**PERSONAL TRIALS** *Dan. 12:7* When God has finished with “the shattering of the holy people,” He will graciously and mercifully bring His Kingdom to His people. His Son will rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. You can claim this principle in your life’s trials. As soon as God has done with you all that He needs to do, He will back off—but not until then. Does He have you in the furnace? He will keep the fire hot until He has melted down all that will melt and has brought to the surface all the slag, wiping it away so that you may become a man or woman of God with the character qualities He’s looking for. As soon as He has filed deep enough down and has shattered your stubborn will, He will bring relief. Then the gracious person of His Son will rule in your innermost being.

11:30 Hebrew from Kittim. 11:31 Hebrew the abomination of desolation.

11:39 Or at a price. 11:41 Hebrew the glorious land. 11:43 Hebrew Cushites.

12:1 Hebrew the great prince. 12:11 Hebrew the abomination of desolation.



# Resurrections

DANIEL 12:1-13

**GOD WILL LEAVE NOBODY IN THE GRAVE** throughout eternity. Every person will be raised and come before Him for judgment. Some will try to name Him as Lord then, but it will be too late. It is an awesome and fearsome thought. Not everyone will be raised at the same time, however, and therefore this topic is sometimes confusing. Only with the New Testament witness to the coming resurrections can we more fully understand what Daniel describes in Daniel 12:1-3.

In this chapter, Daniel does not speak of the resurrection of the Messiah (see Luke 24:6-7) or of the resurrection and Rapture of the church saints (see 1 Thes. 4:15-17). Rather, he describes two other resurrections that follow the years of the Tribulation, which follow the Rapture. The Tribulation is a final, seven-year period of “anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence” (Dan. 12:1) during which the Antichrist will declare himself as God and new Christians will be martyred by the hundreds. There will be worldwide upheaval and bloodshed—worse than the world wars, the Holocaust, the Killing Fields in Cambodia, and all natural disasters.

At the close of the Tribulation period, the angel tells Daniel, “Every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued” (Dan. 12:1). Revelation 20:12-15 also speaks of this book, which records the names of all the redeemed of all time. This verse in Daniel refers to Michael, the special angel over Israel, protecting a group of Jewish believers. They will become the beginning people, the first parents, in the age of the millennial kingdom.

Another group of people is mentioned in Daniel 12:2. They are raised from death, “some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace.” This is a compact verse addressing the two resurrections that Revelation shows will occur one thousand years apart. Those raised to everlasting life include the faithful believers of the Old Testament and the saints who have died during the Tribulation. They will reign as rulers during the one thousand years (Rev. 20:4). In contrast, everlasting disgrace is upon the unbelievers, who will be raised after the one thousand years have passed (Rev. 20:5).

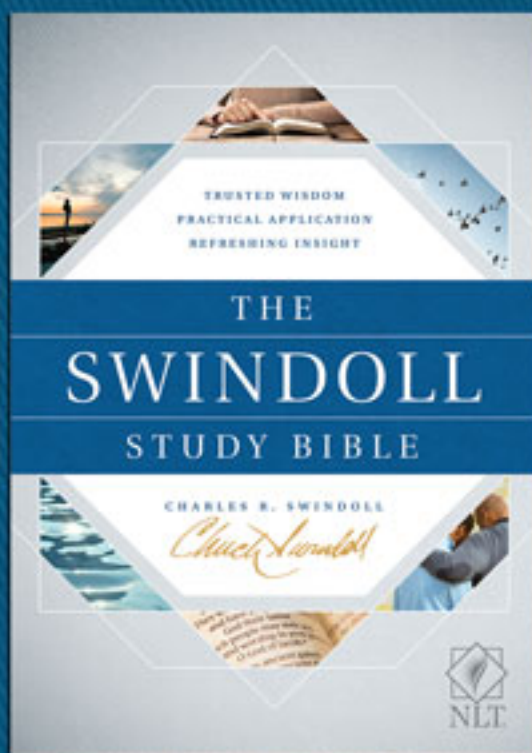
The angel goes on to recognize two other groups of the faithful: “those who are wise” and “those who lead many to righteousness” (Dan. 12:3). The first group is also mentioned in Daniel 11:33-35, which predicts that some of them will die in the Tribulation. This “wise” group seems to be those who teach the Scriptures during the Tribulation. God will provide them with insight to encourage the saints at that time, and some of them will be martyred. Similarly, there will be at that time those gifted as evangelists—“those who lead many to righteousness.” Talk about courage! It seems that some or many of these saints will also be martyred in the Tribulation.

We read that these two groups will “shine as bright as the sky,” and “shine like the stars forever” (Dan. 12:3). What a beautiful reminder that God does not forget those who serve Him. At their coming resurrection, He will remember and reward His faithful ones.

***God does not forget those who serve Him. He will remember and reward His faithful ones.***

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